

## DOCUMENT RESUME

ED 271 261

RC 015 814

AUTHOR Lucas, Liney  
TITLE The Schooling Routine--A Qualitative View for Regional Planning.  
PUB DATE Apr 86  
NOTE 17p.; Paper presented at the Annual Meeting of the American Educational Research Association (70th, San Francisco, CA, April 16-20, 1986).  
PUB TYPE Reports - Evaluative/Feasibility (142) -- Speeches/Conference Papers (150)  
EDRS PRICE MF01/PC01 Plus Postage.  
DESCRIPTORS Educational Facilities; \*Educational Philosophy; \*Educational Resources; Elementary Education; Foreign Countries; Regional Planning; \*Rural Education; Rural Schools; Rural Urban Differences; Student Attitudes; Student Characteristics; Student Evaluation; \*Student Promotion; Teacher Attitudes; Teacher Characteristics; \*Teaching Styles  
IDENTIFIERS \*Brazil

## ABSTRACT

Promotion rate differences in Brazilian rural and urban primary schools prompted an investigation of educational problems in rural areas. Four case studies were conducted in lower (1st through 4th grade) and upper (5th through 8th grade) rural primary schools in three regions of Espirito Santo State which have different cultures, languages, and economies. School location and facilities, teacher and student characteristics and attitudes, and learning routines were described. Recommendations were made to improve educational quality. Teachers were found to lack minimum teaching qualifications and information about educational techniques, were poorly paid, and were passive toward educational change. Technical and administrative personnel were seldom available. Students were two years older than their urban counterparts, came from lower middle class backgrounds, were passive and disciplined in the classroom, and valued school as entertainment and a break from household chores. Teachers regarded themselves as caretakers of knowledge to be imparted to students, maintained formal classroom attitudes, and interacted with few students. Curiosity and creativity were discouraged, classroom activities showed little variation, textbooks were followed page by page, no supplemental materials were used, and information was not related to the known environment. Promotion standards varied from teacher to teacher and seemed more demanding in lower grades. (LFL)

\*\*\*\*\*  
\* Reproductions supplied by EDRS are the best that can be made \*  
\* from the original document. \*  
\*\*\*\*\*

BEST COPY AVAILABLE

ED271261

The Schooling Routine - a qualitative  
view for regional planning

By Liney Lucas

Universidade Federal do Espirito Santo

Paper presented at the Annual Meeting  
of the American Educational Research Association  
(70th, San Francisco, CA, April 16-20, 1986).

U.S. DEPARTMENT OF EDUCATION  
Office of Educational Research and Improvement  
EDUCATIONAL RESOURCES INFORMATION  
CENTER (ERIC)

☐ This document has been reproduced as  
received from the person or organization  
originating it.

☒ Minor changes have been made to improve  
reproduction quality.

• Points of view or opinions stated in this docu-  
ment do not necessarily represent official  
OERI position or policy.

"PERMISSION TO REPRODUCE THIS  
MATERIAL HAS BEEN GRANTED BY

Liney Lucas

TO THE EDUCATIONAL RESOURCES  
INFORMATION CENTER (ERIC)."

RC 015814

## BEST COPY AVAILABLE

The Schooling Routine - a qualitative  
view for regional planning

By Lincy Lucas

Universidade Federal do Espírito Santo



### Introduction

The quality of education offered to any specific population stems from the interaction of basic factors such as the major characteristics of the students, teachers and other educationists involved in the educational process, the conditions of the infrastructure upon which the teaching-learning process is based, and the interactions between school-community and education-society.

Quantitative studies can provide an overall description of the factors mentioned plus a rough identification of relevant problems and an overview of regional differences, enabling administrators to plan and implement adequate policies. However, besides quantitative studies, there are specific conditions that can only be explored through ethnographic studies. Such studies should be developed successively within different contexts in order to enable comparisons to be made and also a degree of generalization upon which the educational planner can derive guidelines for action.

This paper represents an attempt to develop such an ethnographic study. It uses the Study of Inter and Intra-Regional Educational Differences in Espírito Santo State (Gama et al., 1984) as a quantitative basis, and it focuses on one of the problems identified. This problem is related to school performance as shown through promotion rates in primary schools. Whereas in lower primary school (1st to 4th grade) promotion rates are higher in urban schools, in upper primary (5th to 8th grade) the results are the reverse, i.e. promotion rates are higher in rural schools<sup>(1)</sup>. Moreover, it was found that the

(1) Cf. Gama et al., 1984

#### Promotion rates

| Area  | Lower primary ( $\bar{x}$ ) | upper primary ( $\bar{x}$ ) |
|-------|-----------------------------|-----------------------------|
| Urban | 78,9%                       | 83,3%                       |
| Rural | 67,9%                       | 98,2%                       |
| State | 74,2%                       | 85,9%                       |

## BEST COPY AVAILABLE

differences between the two rates were bigger in the regions that were economically more deprived. When this knowledge is associated with other data revealed by the quantitative study, such that rural schools are poorly staffed and ill-equipped, it becomes evident that the problem in question is of great significance to the educational planner.

My intention is to try to throw light on the picture behind the numbers by analysing data from four case studies<sup>(2)</sup> conducted in different counties in the State of Espírito Santo. Primarily I will focus on the operating conditions of upper primary schools in rural areas; also some specific situations related to rural lower primary schools will be analysed.

Methodologically the four case studies mentioned above differ according to: (a) The number of researchers involved and (b) The time span during which the studies were undertaken. The first two studies were conducted by myself over a considerable period of time. (i.e. intensively for one semester, in one case, and spread over two years in the other case). The two remaining studies were undertaken by a team of 7 researchers, over a period of one week. In both cases my responsibility was the investigation of rural upper primary schools. Moreover, with relation to the latest study undertaken, procedures related to triangulation for validation of data interpretation are still under way. I am thus relying on my own research notes and report draft.

A variety of techniques (e.g., interviewing, informal conversation, life stories, direct observation and questionnaires) was used in all case studies. Data validation was obtained both through triangulation among researchers and by submitting interpretation to the school community under investigation.

In this paper I intend to examine the problem stated above through a description of the context of each case study, and an analysis of the schooling routine which involves: (i) mapping the routines, (ii) exploring the perceptions of students and teachers, and (iii) considering the efficiency/efficacy of the teaching-learning

- 
- (2) Lucas, L. O. (1980). Curriculum development in relation to learning needs: a case study of the municipality of Domingos Martins - MPhil thesis, University of London (Unpublished).  
Lucas, L. O. (1983). Antecipação da Terminalidade na Escola de 1º Grau "União Laranjense". Research report Gama et al (1984), O ensino de 1º Grau em Anchieta - uma abordagem qualitativa - research report (mimeo).  
Lucas, L. O. (1985) As escolas pluridocentes (5ª/8ª Zéries) em Guarapari. Research notes.

process. To conclude, I will analyse alternative ways of handling the problems that have emerged, providing guidelines for regional educational planning.

#### The Context of the case studies

The four counties in which the case studies were conducted represent three of the six regions in which the study of differences divided the State, as follows: Central Mountains (Domingos Martins and Afonso Cláudio), Coastal Region (Anchieta) and Metropolitan Region (Guarapari). Historically, both the Coastal and the Metropolitan Regions have a tradition which dates from the beginning of the Portuguese colonization (1500), whereas the Central Mountains were colonized later (1850) through the work of Italian and German immigrants, whose culture (especially that of the Germans) spread throughout the area, tending not to speak Portuguese as their native language and clinging to their original cultures.

Economically, the Metropolitan region is the richest, having the largest concentration of industries in the State, while in the Coastal and Central Mountains regions fishing and farming, respectively, are still the predominant occupations.

In educational terms, the overall picture points to a positive performance of the educational system and more informal educational opportunities in the Metropolitan Region (higher rates of access to school, higher rates of promotion, better qualified teachers, better equipped schools). The Coastal Region is almost at the other extreme of the continuum (the worst results being found in the Northern Region), while the Central Mountains Region exhibits more middle range results.

The counties selected for the case studies are good samples of the regions they represent. The investigation in the Central Mountains focused on lower primary schools (including all such schools in the district of Domingos Martins) and one rural upper primary school with a special curriculum aiming at enhancing practical skills (the only rural upper primary school in Afonso Cláudio). In the Coastal Region, as in the Metropolitan, about fifty per cent of the lower primary schools were visited by the research team and the existing rural upper primary schools were studied in more detail.

## BEST COPY AVAILABLE

Given the fact that the performance of the school system tends to correlate with the socioeconomic variables prevailing in the area, it is interesting to compare the schooling routine in such different settings and try to find explanations for the pattern of performance of the students of rural schools.

### The schooling routine

Where are the schools? Schools are found everywhere. In the main town of a county, however, schools can be large or small, badly or well catered for, but they are invariably located in the central areas of the town, within easy access of students from different areas. In the main towns of the county, lower and upper primary schools do not differ much from those found in the capital of the State. High walls seem to signal to children they are entering another world. There is an area for recreation and assembly before children go to their classrooms, several classrooms with rows of chairs, a table for the teacher, a blackboard, and occasionally a bookcase and posters on the walls, the director's room, a kitchen and toilets. Schools rarely have other facilities such as libraries or sports grounds. Teachers, administrative personnel, helpers and cleaners walk busily around. Outside the county's main town, schools are scattered around, beside the roads, inside farms in the middle of fields, and in small villages. No matter where they are located, their yellow colour and their rectangular shape with a porch-like entrance makes them easily recognizable. The businesslike atmosphere of town schools is not found in county schools. Generally, there is only one teacher to teach students from 1st to 4th grade, to keep the place clean, and to prepare and distribute the school meal. Children come along the road, frequently in small groups, walking sometimes up to 2 hours to get to the school. Some of them ride bicycles, others ride horses to make the trip easier. Even when the school is in a small village, half of the students come from houses quite a distance from the school.

Upper primary schools are always found only in the center of small villages. They differ a lot from one another. At one extreme we can find nice, well-equipped pre-vocational schools with three floors having a library, a science laboratory, a dining-room, a covered recreation area, ample classrooms and other facilities, such

as outside sports grounds, a big vegetable garden and well organized gardens; at the other extreme we can find schools with only a few classrooms, a teacher's administration room, a toilet and a windowless kitchen with its inner patio half covered with wood for the stove, broken chairs, dilapidated blackboards, and no desk for the teachers. In the teacher's administrations room a few new items may be found — filing cabinets, an alcohol mimeo on a table, a few chairs and some improvised bookshelves with a few books. The other two have a common characteristic. They share the facilities with a lower primary school. In one case the upper primary school is open for the morning period (7.30 - 12.30) whereas in the other it is open at night (17.30 - 22.30). They are very different. While the latter school is situated in a larger village and all available space (including the corridors) is being used up as classroom space, it is an old dilapidated building. The other school is situated in a small village and has expanded its original building with community help. It has a dining-room library, a small garden, and the beginnings of a vegetable garden. It has also got students' art work exhibited at its entrance and in the corridors.

Such diverse material facilities did not interfere with the promotion rates, which in all cases was above ninety per cent (90%) whereas the overall figure for urban upper primary schools in the State of Espírito Santo is around eighty per cent (80%). In the case of rural lower primary schools, the promotion rate is between sixty-two per cent (Coastal) and seventy-three per cent (Central Mountains and Rural Metropolitan), while figures for urban areas in the State are around eight-one per cent.

How does the isolation of the rural schools influence promotion rates? Although some conclusions can be drawn with reference to rural lower primary schools, I shall limit myself to commenting on rural upper primary schools.

#### Who are the teachers and the educational personnel in rural upper primary schools?

Rural teachers look surprised when researchers ask permission to visit their classrooms. They usually say they have never been visited before. When information or training is necessary, they

## BEST COPY AVAILABLE

are required to present themselves at the county's administrative unit. They are friendly and they talk freely about their work and their students: they explain their concern over the amount of time spent in activities other than teaching, their difficulties in teaching a heterogeneous group class, their difficulties in assessing students' progress and their complaints about lack of teaching materials. Only rarely was it possible to observe a teacher at work in a classroom except for Domingos Martins, where the investigation was carried on for a much longer period of time.

Lower primary school teachers usually come from the community where they work, they seem to know their students well and they are friendly towards them. Their formal qualifications for teaching are often below the minimum legal requirements — teacher training at secondary school level. However, there's not a large difference between the level of qualification of the teachers in the areas investigated and the average level of qualification of the teachers in the State of Espírito Santo (around 60% of the teachers are formally qualified).

A comparison between teachers working in the lower and in the upper primary schools in rural areas shows that the latter are younger and less experienced than the former. Generally, they have only a secondary school teaching certificate (i.e. less than 20% of the working teachers had the required university degree and very few were continuing their studies) and they tend to live in nearby communities.

Many of these teachers were recruited informally, mostly due to some sort of political influence. This situation leads to some resentment from some qualified local lower primary school teachers who feel discriminated against; and every now and again some discontentment is heard from community members as they declare their intention of "controlling what the teacher is doing with the textbook". Whereas lower primary teachers tend to teach several different grades, simultaneously, upper primary teachers tend to teach more than one subject, though usually related subjects.

It seems that upper primary teachers, despite being closer in age to their students as compared to their lower primary

## BEST COPY AVAILABLE

colleagues (or because of that), are inclined to treat their students more formally, hence there is a larger distance between teacher and student in the classroom and consequently a less friendly classroom atmosphere. The question that arises is whether this distance is due not to age difference but to lack of confidence in their own teaching capacity.

Given the absolute lack of technical and administrative personnel in rural lower primary schools, teachers have to do many different tasks and in some cases they ask the help of the children in simple cleaning/cooking activities. The result of this is that, in some cases, the actual daily period of teaching is reduced to around forty minutes.

Upper primary schools are more fortunate. They have at least a school principal and helper(s) for cleaning and preparing the school meal. However, in one of the schools we visited the principal is rarely there, in two others they are less qualified and/or are less active than the teachers and do not even fulfill their main duties. Only in one of the schools we visited is there a dynamic director who actually coordinates school activities and makes learning a pleasant joint teacher/student effort. In general, each teacher works alone without knowing what his colleagues are doing with the same students.

Teachers are badly paid and frequently have to use part of their salary to buy teaching materials such as chalk. The dissatisfaction with this situation is easily perceived, especially in the case of upper primary teachers who have more responsibility but lower salaries due to the fact that they are paid according to their qualifications and according to the number of hours taught. However, the attitude of most teachers about this lack of respect for their profession is predominantly fatalistic, despite union complaints and strikes.

On the other hand, a large number of teachers show their belief in their work and are happy that students in their schools will acquire some useful knowledge, whereas large numbers of children will never have schooling.

Who are the Students? Students in rural schools are in general older

## BEST COPY AVAILABLE

than those in urban areas. Parents tend to keep their children at home for one or two years after they should be in school, if the school is far from home or if the child doesn't have somebody to walk to school with. Associated with repetition, this leads to a group of students in upper primary schools that is older than their urban colleagues by at least two years.

Students, even at an early age, have responsibilities at home (farming, fishing or tending youngsters), living a different reality from the reality found in textbooks and in the classroom.

Their socioeconomic level is lower middle-class and they can be described as "products" of their parents' social class. With few exceptions, students are passive elements in the classroom, listening to what goes on rather than participating actively in what is being taught. Summing up, in the classroom they are "objects", they are mere parts of a mechanical process. Outside the classroom they play, ask questions, and behave in a relaxed manner. Within the classroom they do their work automatically, answering questions by merely repeating what they hear and write down. They are shy and insecure, respecting the authority of their teacher, never demonstrating curiosity or creativity. Discipline is the first lesson that schools teach.

This austere, unpleasant classroom atmosphere tends to be less obvious in lower primary schools. However, this atmosphere exists from 1st grade classes onwards, shaping itself into a more mechanical and monotonous process, where obedience and passivity are expected more and more as the student climbs up the school hierarchy.

What are the characteristics of the learning routine? In the classroom, the teacher assumes quite an academic and formal attitude while students, through lack of real participation, most of the time sit quietly and behave as if what is being said/done does not concern them. The teacher's attention concentrates on the students who sit in the first few rows of desks and they rarely interact with those who sit at the back of the class.

In general, there's little variety in classroom activities. Occasionally, students are asked to get organized into small groups in order to work together. Most times the activity is

## BEST COPY AVAILABLE

realized by only one student, or at most two, while the others copy what the leader(s) is/are doing. Every day learning concentrates on following a textbook, page by page, taking from it both the content of the learning and the teaching method. The lesson is read either by the teacher or by a chosen student, and sometimes the teacher stresses some particular point. Questioning is not stimulated and relationships between what is being read and the known environment are never established. Knowledge is limited to its own intrinsic value. Teachers get hold of a textbook and become "owners" of a specific knowledge which they then transmit to their students in a patronizing way. Knowledge is conceived as closed boxes owned by teachers and this compartmentalized knowledge does not lead the students to a true understanding of the world around them.

This situation prevails even in schools with a special pre-vocational curriculum, which comprises agricultural techniques and home economics. Even these activities tend to carry a "book-oriented" learning, which is more valued than the activity itself, and agricultural techniques and home economics remain as isolated as the other subjects. Only one school we visited seemed to be coming out of this learning situation, where textbooks are used as "absolute monarchs". A small library, bookshelves stacked with books in each classroom, meetings and discussions with teachers, and probably the presence of two teachers with university degrees (even though these degrees were in economics and agronomy) have led to a different situation. Students in some classes are stimulated to read different books and comment on their findings, and during mathematics lessons a wider range of textbooks is accepted. However, it was in this same school that we attended three successive science classes under the theme "insects, viruses and diseases", without any remark having ever been made about that particular environmental situation, where preventive measures against some contagious diseases have to be taken.

A number of studies, Heyneman et al (1978), Neuman (1980), Schiefelbein and Farrell (1971), have been published concerning the influence of textbooks on achievement, and they point out that textbook availability relates more positively than teacher training with student achievement. However, there seems to be no study related to the actual use made of textbooks. Beeby (1962) states that at an initial stage of

development of the educational system, when poorly trained teachers know little more than their students, the textbook is the only resource capable of helping the teacher, who will only slowly overcome his own difficulties. Although the situation being described seems to be correct, nobody has ever tested it or proved it. Textbooks are almost the sole material available for rural teachers in Brazil. In the schools investigated, students buy textbooks for all subject matters, sometimes with financial difficulty, and use them according to the teacher's instructions. But one cannot assume that all textbooks contribute equally to learning, nor can one infer that the acquisition of information which is made easier by the use of textbooks leads to enabling the students to use this information in order to improve their quality of life, or to understand better the world they live in.

To proceed with our analysis, it is necessary to try to link teaching techniques with methods for assessing learning in use in the schools in question. What to evaluate and how to evaluate are questions left entirely to the discretion of school teachers in Brazil. Therefore, promotion rates reflect the standards of the variety of teachers operating in the system. Investigating assessment procedures in rural upper primary schools, it was found that objective tests are used often and whenever a large quantity of content is to be revised. There is a tendency to select among the exercises in the textbooks a number of questions the teacher considers relevant. Evaluation, therefore, is reduced to the capacity to recall information, thus emphasizing rote learning inherent to narrative teaching based on the textbook.

A comparison between styles of teaching in lower and upper primary rural schools shows that they are similar. When it comes to evaluation, though, lower primary school teachers seem to be far more demanding when evaluating learning in the area of languages and mathematics. Assessment in the area of both social and natural sciences seems to be as perfunctory as in upper primary schools. According to our researchers, it looks as though learning in upper primary rural schools is a step backwards instead of a step forwards, insofar as the quality of reasoning required from students is concerned. It is a mere game whose rules are passivity, obedience and capacity to retrieve and recall information. This could be an explanation for the difference in promotion rates in lower and upper primary schools in rural areas,

provided the facts presented above are correct.

What are the perceptions of the school community about schooling activities? Students talked freely about their experiences in school. They see it as a place where one meets friends and has fun as much as 'a place where one learns important things'. Portuguese and Mathematics are considered the most useful knowledge, whereas History and Social Sciences in general are seen as the 'most boring classes'. In the pre-vocational school, students were asked to write a page about 'My school and the school I dreamed of'. Content analyses showed that the enthusiasm of the students as they enroll in 5th grade gradually decreases and in 8th grade they don't see much use for the knowledge they acquire in school. These essays also showed that the students realise the lack of integration of knowledge, the misuse of the practical pre-vocational activities and the lack of competence shown by their teachers. Nevertheless, they like to come to school because it means a break from house chores. School seems more of an entertainment than a place where useful knowledge is acquired. Insofar as students' own post-primary education and career is concerned, it is obvious that school does not have a very strong influence in their future plans. That, together with difficult economic conditions and the academic difficulties in passing to secondary school leads to a minority of 8th grade students saying they will continue their education. Surprisingly, most of those who intend to continue are girls who intend to attend nearby teacher training secondary schools.

Teachers show a naive perception of their work. They are inclined to see themselves as holders of a knowledge that must be imparted to their students. They don't think about the function of education. It is easily seen that they have an idealized conception of teaching as church ministry. They are unable to see their work either as a tool to maintain the status quo or as a means of changing it. Their passivity towards the overall status of education shows their incapacity to see themselves as members of a class which, united, could force government policies to improve overall teaching conditions. It is true that right now an incipient movement towards class organization is being made in relation to demands of higher salaries. Whether this movement will succeed and extend itself to other areas is hard to tell.

BEST COPY AVAILABLE

Teachers themselves, especially those poorly trained, are also a product of their social milieu. In the pedagogical area their action is impaired by their lack of a more comprehensive education, their lack of deeper knowledge of the area they teach and misconceptions about education and educational techniques. They have heard about methods, they have assimilated theories about desirable pedagogical practices, but they are not able to put all that into practice. To make things worse, there is a generalized lack of coordination and support from more qualified personnel. In the only school we found a well trained and dynamic headteacher, we found a lively school, a search for improvement in teaching methods and assessment and a close link between school and community. I don't mean to say that the situation in that particular school was dramatically different from the situation in other schools, but there was a definite commitment to change.

BEST COPY AVAILABLE

Conclusion

The schools studied present promotion rates quite similar to those around the average means for rural schools. There is no reason to believe that their material conditions differ very much from other rural schools. It becomes clear that, compared to urban schools, they have been discriminated against — less materials, less qualified personnel, less contact with educationists, more difficulties for students to come to school, little integration school/community in areas where this should be vital. The above identified problems lead to the suggestion that educational administrators should concentrate their efforts: (i) on schemes to employ better qualified personnel in rural schools, especially those dealing with upper primary classes, (ii) on developing schemes enabling poorly qualified teachers to attain the specific attention/training they need, so that they can educate youngsters properly, not through mere recall of information, (iii) on improving upper primary schools in rural areas which, at present, are very poorly served, and (iv) on establishing stronger links between the school and the community.

It seems clear to us that these policies need to be examined carefully because they will result in an overall reorientation of the educational system. They require a reassessment of the teaching career and administrative decentralization. Benefits are not going to be clearly felt on a short term basis, but it is possible to envisage: (1) integration of efforts between government and community in maintaining good school conditions; (2) improvement of the school system through special schemes; (3) in-service training of teachers; (4) specific attention to the local human resources; (5) creation/adaptation of teaching materials tailored to specific areas; (6) critical assessment of textbooks to be used in schools; (7) integration school-community in assessing the learning process mediated by the school, and (8) development of practical activities bringing life to science, art and language classes. This is not to say that this is what goes on in urban schools. They are themselves tied to a centralized system despite benefitting from better qualified personnel and from being surrounded by a stronger informal learning

environment. Nevertheless the mentioned aims are potentialities that can be developed given a reappraisal and reorganization of the teaching career and decentralization of educational policy.

Between the two, decentralization with the establishment of resource centers in chosen areas (maybe counties) seems to be essential and easier to implement. It seems a valid alternative to solve the problems identified in the present study, but even more important is the political philosophical question of the real commitment of public administration with a free and compulsory primary education.

Bibliography

Heyneman, S. P. et al Los Textos escolares y el rendimiento académico:  
lo que sabemos. World Bank working Paper no 298. Wash 1978.

Shiefelbien, E. et al The influence of educational resources in Chile:  
Their effect on educational achievement and occupational attainment  
- World Banks Working Paper nº 530, Wash 1983.

Sobrinho, José Amaral. A Concepção e os planos educacionais para a  
superação das desigualdades sociais. 1980 (Inédito)